

DYLANN ROOF

On June 17, 2015 Dylann Roof walked into a historic black church in Charleston, SC and attended a bible study session with the pastor and some of the parishioners. The group had warmly welcomed him, but as they bowed their head in final prayer 45 minutes later, Roof opened fire and executed 9 people. He had published his manifesto online ahead of time and hoped his attack would ignite a race war.

- Roof had spent six months plotting and conducting surveillance of local churches before settling on Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church as the target for his attack because of its historic significance.
- He was arrested the next day without incident and confessed to the attack. He was tried and found guilty in December 2016 in federal court. He was sentenced to death the following month.
- Separately, he was convicted by the state of South Carolina (which withdrew their notice of the death penalty and allowed Dylann Roof to plead guilty to 9 counts of murder and 9 counts of aggravated assault.) On April 10, 2017, a SC judge accepted that plea and sentenced him to nine consecutive life sentences (for the murders) and three 30-year consecutive life sentences (for the three surviving victims).

Roof Before the Attack:

- 21 years old, described as quiet and soft spoken.
- His parents were divorced and had financial problems. The father's relationship with his new wife was turbulent until they also got divorced.
- He could not hold a job and spent a lot of time in his room or sitting on the curb.
- He used drugs, drank, and had run-ins with the police.
- He attended 7 schools in 9 years, shifting schools between his parents' houses. He attended the ninth grade twice before dropping out of high school.
- Roof bought the Glock handgun he used in the attack with money his parents gave him for his birthday, and he practiced shooting in his backyard.
- He had 3 run-ins with police earlier that year including an incident where he dressed in all black and loitered at a mall and asked employees when they would be leaving.

Roof's Radicalization to Violence:

- By all accounts, it appears Roof radicalized online and that he was not part of any violent group. He researched racial crimes committed on white victims and visited extremist and hate websites. He even created his own extremist website.

- The Trayvon Martin case was a turning point for him. He wrote in his 2,500 word manifesto, that it was the event that “truly awakened” him.
 - Martin, a black 17-year-old, was fatally shot in 2012 in Sanford, FL, by neighborhood watch volunteer George Zimmerman. He said, “It was obvious that Zimmerman was in the right, but more importantly this prompted me to type in the words ‘black on white crime’ into Google, and I have never been the same since that day.”
- He believed whites were the forgotten majority, in jeopardy because of immigrants, often victimized, and overlooked by the media and government leaders. He called himself a white supremacist, a white nationalist and said he supported racist ideas of the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazis.